

INTRODUCTION OF THE SENIOR PRESCRIPTION DRUG ASSISTANCE EXPANSION DEMONSTRATION ACT

HON. BENJAMIN A. GILMAN

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 29, 1999

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce The Senior Prescription Drug Assistance Expansion Demonstration Act of 1999. In doing so, I am offering legislation which serves as a viable first step towards addressing the serious issue of rising prescription drug costs for our Nation's seniors.

The purpose of this legislation is to provide assistance to those states which have undertaken the step to offer supplemental assistance for low income seniors to help defray the rising cost of prescription medications.

This legislation will create a demonstration project that will provide block grant funding to permit three states with an existing prescription assistance program for low income seniors to raise their income eligibility by \$5,000 for both single individuals and married couples. Should the program be successful, it can later be expanded to other states that have created such prescription assistance programs.

This legislation recognizes that the participating states have widely varying requirements with regards to the administration of their prescription-assistance plans. Consequently, it will not alter these requirements in any way, except that to qualify for the federal funds, each state must raise its income eligibility for both the single and married categories.

Mr. Speaker, the last five years have seen both a rapid increase in the amount of revolutionary drugs available on the market, as well as in the price of those drugs. The availability of these new drugs has been a wonderful result of annual advances in medical technology and knowledge. Regrettably, these advances also come with a price, one that is increasingly difficult for many senior citizens to pay.

A number of our colleagues in this House, as well as in the other body, have offered various bills designed to address the rising cost of prescription medication for senior citizens. These bills have tended to use either price controls, or the extension of free or heavily subsidized prescriptions as a new federal entitlement, as a solution to this problem.

The nation's experience with price controls during prior administrations has shown that they are not a viable tool. Moreover, while the new entitlement proposed by the current administration sounds appealing, neither the President, nor anyone in the minority has offered a viable way to pay for it. In our current budget environment, an entitlement proposal without a clear funding source is nothing more than a hollow promise.

Furthermore, price controls for prescription drugs run the very real risk of stifling future development in medical advances. While none of the major drug companies has any reason to plead poverty, the implementation of a federal system of mandatory price controls would certainly serve as a major disincentive on the

future research and development of new prescription medications. In this sense, medical success does come with a price.

On the other hand, prices should not be so high that the target audience for which the drugs were developed cannot afford to purchase those drugs. Regrettably, this has increasingly been the case over the past several years for seniors living on fixed incomes.

The Federal Government has a vital role to play in fostering innovation in medicine, so that today's seniors can receive the benefits of tomorrow's new medical technology. The last few years have seen wonderful advances in drugs to treat osteoporosis, arthritis, and Alzheimer's disease.

At the same time, a new federally run bureaucracy is not the answer to address the needs of our senior citizens being able to afford these new drugs as they become available. Such a bureaucracy would take medical decisions on which drugs to prescribe away from doctors, dampen the overall level of medical research on new drugs, and force seniors to accept a one-size-fits-all federal program.

This legislation would avoid those problems. It sets out to expand on ideas that the states have shown do work in practice. The Epic program in New York is highly successful, and legislators of both parties in Albany have consistently voted to expand the program each year. However, these State officials understand that New York cannot afford on its own to cover every senior that it should.

By partnering with New York and other States with prescription assistance programs, the Federal Government will be able to both provide aid to thousands of seniors on fixed incomes with their monthly prescription drug bills, while leaving prescribing authority where it belongs, with the doctors. In essence, everyone wins.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join in supporting this worthwhile legislation, which helps needy seniors by providing the States with resources to expand programs which have already been proven to work.

A TRIBUTE TO PAUL MATHIEU
AND FAMILY OF MIAMI, FLORIDA

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 29, 1999

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Mr. Paul Mathieu and the Mathieu Family of Miami, Florida, for the outstanding example of faith in action and excellence which they embody in their daily lives.

Paul Mathieu is a Jackson High School graduate who will be attending Harvard University in the fall, accomplishing his parents' dream of seeing all of their children attend college. He is the ninth child of Phinellie and Teucheler Mathieu, who came to Miami from Haiti in 1974. Their incredible faith, courage, and ethos of hard work have enabled this remarkable Haitian immigrant family who fled political repression, social brutality, and physical danger in their homeland to seek, and ulti-

mately, to find, a better future for their children in their new home. Each of their children—Techeline, Firma, Fednie, Samuel, Emmanuel, Marc, Luckson, Marthe, and Paul—has contributed significantly to the family tradition of success and of active citizenship in America.

The Mathieus have earned their educations through scholarships, grants, and work study programs. Techelene Mathieu-Murray, the eldest of the children, is a fourth-grade teacher at Toussaint Louverture Elementary School. Firma Mathieu is a teacher at Dunbar Elementary School. Fednie Mathieu is a nurse at Jackson Memorial Hospital. Samuel Mathieu works for an agency that helps disadvantaged youth. Emmanuel Mathieu is studying criminal justice and elementary education at Florida Memorial College. Marc Mathieu is graduating from Northwestern University with a degree in journalism. Luckson Mathieu is a pre-Med student at Harvard University. Marthe Mathieu is a psychology major at the University of Florida. Paul Mathieu plans to pursue a career in medical research at Harvard University.

Mr. and Mrs. Mathieu have imparted to their children a strong religious faith, self-discipline, and an immense love of family. When the children were growing up, their father made a habit of regularly visiting their schools and knowing their teachers before he left for one of his night shifts at work. An example of the level of religious faith exhibited by the family is a quote by Mrs. Mathieu: "If you don't have God in your life and you have children, I don't know how you can sleep." Mrs. Mathieu also mentioned, "You want to know our secret? The only secret we have is prayer, prayer, prayer. We showed them how to serve God. God is the leader. . ."

Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a privilege to pay tribute to such outstanding and inspiring Americans as the Mathieu Family of Miami, Florida, who are working at the marvelous task of handing over their country not less but even better and greater than they received it.

TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT COLONEL GARY ANTHONY CORREIA

HON. HOWARD L. BERMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

HON. BARNEY FRANK

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 29, 1999

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts, and I are pleased today to pay tribute to Lieutenant Colonel Gary Anthony Correia, a man whose life exemplifies the meaning and spirit of leadership. Gary is being honored for 20 years of distinguished service in the United States Marine Corps.

Gary has set an outstanding example for his colleagues in the Corps, where he has served with intelligence, skill and dedication. He is highly regarded by his peers as an involved, devoted and effective Marine.

Gary is a man of action and accomplishment. A native of New Bedford, Massachusetts, he graduated from Boston College in 1979 at the top of his class and soon after